

Message Text

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ACTION L-02

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3251

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USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 1988

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AOIRG ICRC

SUBJECT: ICRC OPERATIONS IN ETHIOPIA

REFS: (A) ADDIS 1763; (B) ADDIS 1937; (C) ASMARA 215;
(D) STATE 36793; (E) STATE 36706; (F) KHARTOUM 400

SUMMARY. ICRC REP GAILLARD HAS GIVEN EMBASSY RUNDOWN OF CURRENT ICRC EFFORTS TO BECOME ACTIVE IN NORTHERN ETHIOPIA. IN SUMMARY, EPMG/DIRG STILL STONEWALLING ICRC AND LATTER, THEREFORE, WORKING AS BEST IT CAN THROUGH ETHIOPIAN RED CROSS. LATTER, HOWEVER, LACKS RESOURCES WITH WHICH TO CONDUCT EFFECTIVE RELIEF OPERATIONS AND OTHER ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT AGENCIES MAY SHORTLY SEIZE ALL OR PART OF ITS RELIEF GOODS FOR THEIR OWN PURPOSES. ICRC EFFORT TO GAIN EPMG/DIRG COOPERATION CONTINUES BUT ERC DECISION-MAKERS ARE LEAVING THE COUNTRY TO ATTEND CONFERENCE IN GENEVA. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBASSY CONTACTED ATO TEFERRA, SYG ETHIOPIAN RED CROSS, AFTERNOON FEBRUARY 18 IN ACCORDANCE PARA 4 REF C. TEFERRA PROMISED PASS LIST OF REQUIREMENTS TO ICRC REP GAILLARD, WHO CALLED ON POL COUNSELOR NOON FEBRUARY 19 AND RECAPPED CURRENT STATUS ICRC'S EFFORTS HERE. GAILLARD MADE POINT OF QUALIFYING HIS VISIT AS UNOFFICIAL, AND HE SHOULD BE APPROPRIATELY PROTECTED.

2. PICKING UP WHERE REF A LEFT OFF, GAILLARD SAID THAT MORILLON NEVER DID GET TO SEE PMAC CHAIRMAN BG TEFERI BANTI. GAILLARD
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PURSUING EFFORT DO SO, THUS FAR UNSECEESSFULLY. IT GAILLARD'S

JUDGMENT THAT PMAC ASSIMILATES ICRC OBSERVERS WITH PRESS AND DESIRES KEEP THEM AWAY FROM ERITREA. HIS OBJECTIVE IS TO CLARIFY ICRC'S ROLE AND MISSION TO PUT END TO PMAC'S CONFUSION WITH RESPECT TO IT.

3. MEANWHILE, ICRC CONCENTRATING ON DOING WHAT IT CAN TO MAKE ETHIOPIAN RED CROSS (ERC) MORE EFFECTIVE. NOT UNEXPECTEDLY, EFFORT ENCOUNTERING ONE PROBLEM AFTERANOTHER. ERC HAS SENT TEAM TO ERITREA TO DO SURVEY OF NEEDS. RESULTS NOT YET OFFICIALLY KNOWN. IT NOT EVEN CLEAR WHETHER REPORT COMPILED BY TEAM SUBMITTED, OR TO WHOM. ERC DOES INTEND SEND SOME RELIEF NORTH BUT HAS NO MEANS OF DOING SO. MOREOVER, IT IS KEEPING ORGANIZATIONS WILLING TO COOPERATE IN THIS EFFORT AT ARMS LENGTH "TO ENHANCE ITS OWN PRESTIGE." GRADUALLY, HOWEVER, ERC BEGINNING COMPREHEND THAT ICRC MAY PROVE HELPFUL.

4. ICRC HAD PLANNED ASSISTANCE FOR ERITREA PRIOR TO RECENT EVENTS, INCLUDING MEDICAL TEAM, DISTRIBUTION OF RELIEF AND VISIT OF PRISONS. LATTER DISALLOWED BY AUTHORITIES BEFORE LATEST SPATE OF FIGHTING BEGAN IN NORTH.

5. TWO HUNDRED THIRTY TONS OF ICRC RELIEF WHEAT FLOUR ARRIVED IN MASSAWA YESTERDAY. THIS FURTHER COMPLICATES SITUATION BECAUSE ICRC NOT YET OPERATION IN ERITREA. AS RESULT, THIS WHEAT FLOUR TURNED OVER TO ERC. FOUR TRUCKLOADS OF RELIEF COMMODITIES NOW EXPECTED BE SHIPPED FROM MASSAWA TO ASMARA (PRESUMABLY BY ERC) UNDER MILITARY ESCORT. THIS ALSO PROBLEM FOR ICRC BECAUSE RELIEF GOODS PLASTERED WITH RED CROSSES AND JUXTOPOSITION WITH ETHIOPIAN MILITARY ESCORT POLITICALLY DELICATE. AS IF THIS WERE NOT ENOUGH, ETHIOPIAN R&R COMMISSION "CASTING CONSUPISCENT EYES AT ECRC/ERC RELIEF SUPPLIES." ICRC HAS ALSO OFFERED ERC USE OF AIRCRAFT CAPABLE OF CARRYING 7-40 TONS OF RELIEF GOODS, PROVIDING ONLY ETHIOPIAN AUTHORITIES "PERMIT ICRC TO BECOME OPERATIONAL IN ERITREA."

6. DIRG 'S POSITION THUS FAR CONTINUES BE THAT IT IS IN CONTROL OF SITUATION IN THE NORTH; SPECIAL HELP NOT NEEDED AT THIS TIME; AND, IF AND WHEN IT IS NEEDED, ICRC WOULD BE CONTACTED. ICRC REP NEVERTHELESS AWARE THAT ABOVE-MENTIONED REPORT, PREPARED BY ERC SURVEY TEAM UPON ITS RETURN FROM ERITREA, DOES CONTAIN CONFIDENTIAL

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ONE RECOMMENDATION TO DIRG/EPMG PERMIT ICRC OPERATIONS IN NORTH.

7. SEMINAR ON AFRICAN RED CROSS SOCIETIES BEGINS IN GENEVA NEXT WEEK. PRESIDENT AND FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT OF ERC WILL ATTEND AND ARE DEPARTING ETHIOPIA TO DO SO THIS WEEK. "THEY ARE THE ONLY ERC DECISION-MAKERS. OF THEIR TWO STANDINS, ONE IS WORKING ONLY HALF-TIME AND THE OTHER ONE NOT AT ALL."

8. IN CIRCUMSTANCES, GAILLARD SAID, IT MAY BE SOME TIME BEFORE
ERC/ICRC HERE ABLE DETERMINE WHAT PART LIST CONTAINED REF C
CAN BE PROVIDED BY THEM AND WHEN.

9. NOTWITHSTANDING FOREGOING, GAILLARD EXPECTS TO PERSEVERE IN
HIS QUIET EFFORTS GAIN EPMG/DIRG'S COOPERATION SO THAT ICRC MAY BE-
COME EFFECTIVE IN ETHIOPIA.

10. EMBASSY POUCHING DEPARTMENT FULL TEXT OF MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT
EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ICRC TO TEFERI BANTE OF FEBRUARY 9, 1975,
PROVIDED US IN CONFIDENCE BY GAILLARD.

11. USMISSION GENEVA'S 1105 JUST RECEIVED AND EMBASSY GENERALLY
AGREES WITH MORILLON'S ASSESSMENT OF ETHIOPIAN SENSITIVITIES
AS WELL AS HIS ESTIMATE ON THE POSSIBLE ROLE OF THE ITALIAN
GOVERNMENT AT THIS JUNCTURE CONTAINED THEREIN.
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